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Chairman:	Mr. BIGGAR (Vice-Chairman)	(Ireland)
later:	Mr. CISSÉ (Chairman)	(Senegal)

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In the absence of Mr. Cissé (Senegal), Mr. Biggar (Ireland), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 97: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/49/38, A/49/176, A/49/204-E/1994/90, A/49/205-E/1994/91, A/49/217-E/1994/103, A/49/287-S/1994/894 and Corr.1, A/49/308, A/49/314 and Corr.1, A/49/327 and Corr.1, A/49/349, A/49/354, A/49/365-E/1994/119, A/49/378, A/49/381, A/49/462 and Corr.1, A/49/506, A/49/532, A/49/587 and Corr.1; A/C.3/49/13)

1. Mrs. AOUIJ (Tunisia) recalled that ever since its creation, the United Nations had attached priority to the principle of equality for women and the promotion of their rights. Since then, it had played a decisive role in the drafting of numerous international legal instruments under which States parties committed themselves to taking appropriate steps to ensure development and progress for women.

2. By acceding to those instrument, Tunisia had shown its determination to eliminate de jure and de facto discrimination against women. Tunisia, a country with an Arab and Islamic culture, had managed to adapt its institutions to international standards in order to integrate women into modern life. To that end, far-reaching social reforms had been undertaken shortly after independence, and in 1956 the Personal Status Code had been adopted, reconciling traditional values, cultural identity, religion and the demands of modern life. The Code abolished polygamy, prohibited unilateral repudiation, gave both spouses the right to marry, regulated the age of marriage, established that girls, even minors, should consent freely to marriage and instituted new family relations based on equality of rights and duties for spouses.

3. The principle of equality was enshrined in Tunisia's Constitution, especially in articles 6 and 7 which gave Tunisian women the right to vote and to run for political office. The Electoral Code, the Labour Code and the law on the reform of the educational system confirmed the principle of equality of men and women before the law.

4. To ensure that Tunisians knew about and understood the new legislation, her Government intended to take various measures, particularly in the area of education. Since the 1960s, the State had been allocating over a quarter of its budget to education and gearing its policy in that sector towards encouraging the emancipation and advancement of Tunisian women. In 1992-1993, the rate of enrolment in primary education had been only marginally lower for girls than for boys; girls accounted for 47.2 per cent of enrolments in secondary education and 40 per cent in higher education.

5. The July 1991 reform of the educational system had made education compulsory and free for girls and boys aged from 6 to 16 and punished parents who forced their children to leave school. That law principally benefited girls, who constituted the majority of school drop-outs and were the main victims of illiteracy, especially in rural areas, and it reduced the disparities among regions. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the National Union of

Tunisian Women, which had won second prize from UNESCO for its efforts in that sphere, had also launched a national campaign against female illiteracy, which was still considerable. School books were being updated to enhance the image of women and to eliminate the stereotypes from which they had suffered previously.

6. Soon after independence, the Tunisian Government had adopted an effective family planning policy. The importing and advertising of contraceptives was authorized, voluntary termination of pregnancy was regulated, and the health care infrastructure for women (maternity and primary health care) and the training of personnel (doctors and midwives) were expanding. Efforts were also being made to raise public awareness in that sphere, especially in rural areas.

7. That egalitarian, progressive legislation would bring about social and economic change and, by facilitating women's access to the labour market, would allow them to contribute effectively to the sustainable development of their country. Article 5 of the Labour Code established the principle of non-discrimination between men and women in recruitment, professional classification and remuneration. Women were entitled to maternity leave and enjoyed the same rights as men to social security benefits. Women accounted for 20.9 per cent of the economically active population in Tunisia; 26 per cent of women were employed in the agricultural sector and 53.7 per cent in the industrial sector, particularly the textile industry. Vocational training had made considerable strides, offering women equal, if not preferential, access to all branches of activity, including in the technical field.

8. Despite the measures taken to promote women in State bodies, women were still a tiny minority at the decision-making level, a situation which reflected neither their real weight in national life nor their abilities. Although they enjoyed the same political rights as men, they accounted for only 7 per cent of parliamentarians, 14 per cent of municipal councillors and 23 per cent of judges and magistrates. Of the 113 members of the Economic and Social Council, only 10 were women, and there were only 2 women on the Supreme Council of the Judiciary. Over 25 per cent of civil servants were women, but only 5 per cent were at the senior level. While the situation was appreciably better in public health, in higher education only 4.7 per cent of university professors and 7 per cent of senior lecturers were women. On the other hand, many women were active in associations and they made sure that their demands were heard.

9. In her country, women's rights still had to be secured in the face of reactionary traditions, obscurantism and extremist religious movements whose basic aim was to maintain the status quo for women. That was why those rights had to be constantly guaranteed, protected and, above all, developed.

10. The democratization process of the new Tunisia undertaken by President Ben Ali would especially benefit women, who were to be involved in the proposal and drafting of juridical reforms benefiting them. A commission made up of equal numbers of men and women would be responsible for proposing amendments to laws which were still discriminatory. The Supreme Committee for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms would do likewise within the overall context of the rights of the individual.

11. The reforms announced by the President of the Republic on 13 August 1992, National Women's Day, had been passed by Parliament in July 1993. They gave women a legal status commensurate with their role in society. Mothers had a greater say in the upbringing of children. A fund had been created to pay financial support to children and divorced women, in an amount determined by the court, in cases where the father failed to pay. A Tunisian mother married to a non-Tunisian would henceforth be able, with the agreement of the father, to pass on her nationality to any child born outside Tunisia. Furthermore, and significantly for an Arab and Islamic country, domestic violence was punishable and violence against a spouse would henceforth be considered an aggravating circumstance. The prejudices and practices which had justified violence against women would be prohibited by law and resisted by women's NGOs which were mobilizing against that social phenomenon.

12. On the institutional level, a post of adviser on women's rights had been created within the office of the President of the Republic, and the majority political party, the Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique (RCD), had a deputy Secretary-General responsible for women's rights. Several women had been assigned to ministerial offices, an office to oversee the status of women had been created and a "Women and Development" committee set up under the Eighth Plan was evidence of the Government's desire to ensure that women were both agents and beneficiaries of development projects. In August 1993, a women had been appointed Minister for Women's and Family Affairs.

13. Concern to improve the status of women had been a constant factor in Tunisia's policy, demonstrating that it was possible to reconcile women's concerns and Islamic law, while respecting the democratic model.

14. However, there were still numerous social, economic, political and, above all, cultural obstacles to equality, one of the main ones being women's own ignorance of their basic rights. That was why women's NGOs had to conduct vast legal literacy campaigns in both urban and rural areas. It was necessary, above all, to combat illiteracy, violence against women and regional disparities. Tunisia had noted with satisfaction that those issues were on the agenda of the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing in 1995, and intended to contribute its support and expertise to the Conference to help ensure its success. The advancement of women was crucial for the progress of humankind as a whole. It had in fact been shown, and UNDP had confirmed, that one of the criteria for measuring a country's progress was, undeniably, the position, role and status accorded to women in that country.

15. Mr. Cissé (Senegal) took the Chair.

16. Mr. RATA (New Zealand) said that there had been some positive advances in the status of women, particularly the adoption in 1993 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on violence against women. In most areas, however, particularly access to employment, education and health services, women's position had hardly improved at all. Women were the main victims of extreme poverty and accounted for the majority of refugees and displaced persons. Rape, genital mutilation and other forms of violence against women continued to be a serious concern.

17. The Beijing Conference in 1995 would provide an opportunity to review the advances made by women in recent years, to look at their present position and to pave the way for the future by putting in place a Platform for Action which set realistic objectives. One of those objectives must be the empowerment of women in all spheres, including political and economic life, and their participation in decision-making. His delegation saw the participation of women in political and economic decision-making was central to development.

18. New Zealand sought to involve women in all activities supported as part of its overseas development assistance programme. When considering contributions to multilateral organizations, his Government always took into account the efforts made by those organizations to promote the women's dimension and women in development activities.

19. The need to combat violence against women had, in recent years, been forced on the international community, which had adopted a Declaration to that end. Efforts were being made to address that problem at every level of government in New Zealand. The reduction of family violence was one of the highest priorities of the Crime Prevention Unit. The new Domestic Violence Protection Bill recently introduced into Parliament was intended, among other things, to increase the penalties for those who committed acts of violence against anyone with whom they had close personal relationships. In October 1994, a new law had come into force which made it illegal to distribute, exhibit or possess films, videotape or publications which promoted the sexual abuse of children, sexual violence, torture or extreme violence.

20. In accordance with the Jakarta Declaration for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific, New Zealand attached great importance to the protection of indigenous women. Indigenous women's issues should be included in the Beijing Platform for Action.

21. In cooperation with NGOs represented in a consultative committee and within the framework of preparations for the forthcoming Fourth World Conference on Women, his Government was currently establishing priorities for improving the status of women in New Zealand. That had also been the task of the Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference held at Jakarta in June 1994.

22. His Government hoped that one of the results of the Beijing Conference would be an increase in the number of countries that had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and a marked improvement in the commitment of States parties to meeting their reporting obligations under the Convention. The report of the Secretary-General (A/49/308) indicated that there had been a decline in that area. The Convention provided the legal underpinning for the position of women around the world and its reporting provisions were an important element in monitoring the progress made in that regard. The effective functioning of that instrument depended on the commitment of individual Member States to meet their reporting obligations. It also depended on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women having sufficient resources to function effectively. The fact that the Committee's resources were inadequate said a great deal about the priorities of the United Nations.

23. There was still a long way to go in many areas to advance the status of women. The World Conference would provide an opportunity to set realistic goals and objectives.

24. Mr. HASHIM (Bangladesh) said that the commitment shown by the international community when it had formulated and adopted the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women in 1985 with the aim of overcoming the socio-economic marginalization of women had not stood the test of time. He hoped that the Fourth World Conference on Women would help to accelerate the pace of implementation of the Strategies. There had been a growing awareness and acceptance of gender issues. In particular, it had been recognized that measures to achieve equality for women were a matter of priority, that the full potential of women could be harnessed only by improving their quality of life and social status, that the advancement of women in all spheres would facilitate their integration into the development process, and that all those issues needed to be taken into account in national plans and in the global strategy for the advancement of women.

25. Despite their willingness to promote women's rights and welfare, developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, found it difficult to meet their commitments owing to economic constraints, such as the external debt burden, which limited resources for investment in the social sector. The international community must therefore concentrate its resources on financing the initiatives taken by those countries. He hoped that the recommendations formulated by the Commission on the Status of Women pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/108 would facilitate the endeavours of developing countries to realize their objectives in the area of the advancement of women; he also hoped that the Expert Group Meeting on Women in Development in Least Developed Countries, to be held in January 1995 under the auspices of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, would help to mobilize women in those countries and strengthen their role in all sectors of development.

26. Bangladesh had demonstrated its commitment to women by signing and ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The international community had recognized that commitment by electing Bangladesh to international bodies such as the Commission on the Status of Women, the Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

27. At the national level, the Constitution of Bangladesh guaranteed equal rights for women in political and social life and also contained special provisions designed to ensure the overall advancement of women. The Government had enacted laws to overcome certain social problems affecting women, such as prohibiting child marriage and the practice of dowries. A Ministry of Women's Affairs and a National Women's Organization had been established. Measures had been taken to ensure women's participation in decision-making in professional and managerial positions. For instance, 10 per cent of all seats in the legislature were henceforth reserved for women. Moreover, Bangladesh was the only country in the world in which both the Prime Minister and the leader of the parliamentary opposition were women. The Government had placed emphasis on women's active participation in the mainstream of development activities at all

levels by launching specific programmes to increase women's involvement in such sectors as education, health, agriculture, industry, trade and environment. Measures had also been taken to provide professional training, loans on easy terms, opportunities for self-employment and assistance to women's voluntary organizations. Education was considered a prerequisite for women's involvement in the development process and an innovative programme involving the provision of stipends and free tuition for all female students up to tenth grade had been launched as a national priority. All of those measures had resulted in an increase in the number of women's initiatives undertaken with the support of the Government and non-governmental organizations. There was reason to hope for a better future for women in Bangladesh through the mobilization of national resources backed by external support.

28. He welcomed the forthcoming Fourth World Conference on Women which would provide an opportunity to address the problems mentioned in the Platform for Action and to outline measures for achieving the objectives of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. He also welcomed the efforts made to improve the status of women in the Secretariat and hoped that the Secretary-General would take further steps to eliminate direct and indirect discrimination against staff members with family responsibilities by paying special attention to issues such as child-care arrangements and career break schemes. On the question of recruitment, Bangladesh favoured a policy that would ensure both gender balance and equitable geographical distribution. Diversity among United Nations personnel should first and foremost be geographical. He therefore called on the Secretary-General to exercise caution and to ensure that any initiatives to recruit more women did not conflict with efforts to achieve equitable geographical distribution.

29. Ms. RAJAONARIVELO (Madagascar) said that the situation of women throughout the world and particularly in developing countries was deteriorating steadily. Her delegation, like others, believed that the way to strengthen the role of women in development was to meet women's basic needs, particularly in the areas of education and health, and to eliminate such obstacles as malnutrition, hunger, poverty and illiteracy. To achieve that objective, it was essential to formulate and implement appropriate policies at the national level within the overall context of development, and at the international level, to take specific steps to ensure the advancement of women in general.

30. Madagascar's strategy for applying the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women comprised two lines of action: the statutory advancement of women through the reduction, and ultimately the elimination, of disparities between the sexes in terms of access to resources and participation in social and political life; and the socio-economic advancement of women through the enhancement of their living standards and their independence. A whole range of measures benefiting girls and women, especially in rural areas, had been taken in both the public and private sectors, notably through women's organizations and non-governmental organizations. Those measures were based on the values of solidarity inherited from Malagasy culture and on international humanitarian law and were designed to foster a spirit of initiative and competitiveness. Given the scale and complexity of the efforts that must be made, however, further concerted support from the international community was still needed. Madagascar had always

appreciated fully the action taken for the benefit of Malagasy women by international organizations in cooperation with the Malagasy authorities, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Health Organization. That multifaceted action, which ranged from maternal and child health care and efforts to combat AIDS to the promotion of traditional and informal activities such as fishing, agriculture and handicrafts, was being carried out with the support of regional and international financial institutions. The programme of training, job creation and improved conditions for women implemented in the context of the revision of the Malagasy Labour Code was also particularly significant.

31. Regarding the Fourth World Conference on Women, she noted that the Conference would provide an opportunity to study problems related to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and that its success would depend on whether account was taken of concerns expressed at the regional level, for instance, in the African Platform for Action adopted recently at Dakar by the African countries which she hoped would be taken into account in the final document of the Conference.

32. Mr. SAHRAOUI (Algeria) said that, in 1985, when the international community had adopted the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women for the period up to the year 2000, women throughout the world had had legitimate reason to hope that the position of women would improve considerably by the start of the twenty-first century. At present, although some progress had been made, essentially at the legal level, it had to be acknowledged that, far from improving, the position of women was deteriorating overall, not only in developing countries but in developed countries also. However, acknowledging that fact in no way meant resigning oneself to it. Instead of becoming fatalistic it was necessary to see to it that the international community redoubled its efforts to keep its promises.

33. The structural and economic difficulties that prevented women from participating in, and benefiting from, the development process had increased considerably in developing countries, due to the steady deterioration in the socio-economic situation over the past 10 years. It could even be said that, in those countries, women were waging a daily battle to survive under sub-human conditions, resulting from absolute poverty, disease, unemployment, malnutrition and illiteracy. Accordingly it continued to be essential that the international community should correct the imbalances in the world economy and establish an equitable and joint partnership so as to take charge of the problems affecting women and other underprivileged categories of society.

34. The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies had opened broad prospects and pointed to ways of furthering the advancement of women in accordance with national situations and the changing international context. However, since their adoption, the face of the world had changed drastically; accordingly, the Fourth World Conference on Women, which was to be held in 1995 in Beijing, was of the greatest importance. His delegation was convinced that if the international community as a whole prepared carefully for the Conference, if it provided the means necessary for that purpose and if it explored further the possibilities offered by the changing international relations, the Conference

would be able to examine the various aspects of the position of women, whether structural and general or peculiar to a particular country, and would be able to advance their cause substantially.

35. Mr. HUSSAIN (United Arab Emirates) pointed out that the United Nations had been involved for 20 years in activities aimed at the advancement of women, through such institutions as INSTRAW which focused on training, and yet the position of women in the world was not improving. The main reason was that countries did not have sufficient resources to formulate programmes of education and training for women. It was essential, in particular, to develop the training of women in such traditional sectors as handicrafts, small-scale industry and nursing, in accordance with the recommendations made in chapter 24 of Agenda 21 which had been adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

36. In the 1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, the third in a series of reports, the Secretary-General stressed the all-important role played by women in the world economy and in development. At the same time the poverty that prevailed in many countries caused them to fail in their efforts to improve the status of women. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies set forth the goals to be followed as a matter of priority in that area, namely, equality, literacy, education and vocational training. Similarly, the report of the Secretary-General on preparations for the Beijing World Conference contained very interesting suggestions concerning the issues which the Conference was to consider as a matter of priority. It was of the utmost importance, in that connection, that countries should submit the reports requested of them on the position of women at the national level, since it was on the basis of those reports that a plan of action for the future would be adopted.

37. Women in the United Arab Emirates were greatly respected because of the place which the Koran assigned to them in the family and in society. The National Federation of Women created in 1975 had considerably widened the field of its activities, and was doing a great deal to improve the lot of women in remote areas and in rural areas. The Federation's activities covered a very wide variety of areas, including health and literacy. In the United Arab Emirates, women had access to employment in all sectors. They were teachers, doctors and engineers. They also served in the armed forces and in the diplomatic service. They pursued advanced university studies in all fields and could complete their training abroad.

38. In response to the Secretary-General's request, the United Arab Emirates had prepared a national report for the Beijing Conference. The report, which had been prepared by the wife of the President, gave an overview of the position of women in the Emirates; that position was consistent with the country's legislation and with its Islamic traditions.

39. Mrs. DROZD (Belarus) said that the documents before the Committee showed the breadth of the work undertaken at all levels to prepare for the World Conference on Women. She paid tribute to the efforts made by the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mrs. Gertrude Mongella, and noted, in particular, the results of the informal consultations which the latter had chaired in the

context of the Economic and Social Council with a view to drawing up a draft platform. She also stressed the interest of the inter-agency meetings which had considered specific means of implementing the platform once it was adopted. Finally, she supported the suggestion that such meetings should be held periodically after the Conference was over.

40. A national coordination centre had been established in Belarus in order to prepare for the World Conference; the various government bodies were represented in that centre. Pursuant to resolution 37/7 of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Government had prepared a report containing important data regarding the position of women in Belarus and indicating how it could be improved. Given the importance of those reports, her delegation appealed to the countries which had not yet submitted their reports to do so without delay. That would help speed up the preparation of the draft platform which was to be submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-ninth session.

41. The increase in the number of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was one of the major achievements of recent years. She recalled that the World Conference on Human Rights had made equal rights between men and women one of its priority goals. The High Commissioner for Human Rights also attached great importance to that issue and the same was true of the Centre for Human Rights, which had made safeguarding the rights of women one of its main activities.

42. In November 1993, the Belarusian Government had issued a decree adopting a number of measures to promote the advancement of women. The Government was well aware that labour, family and civil legislation must be reformed in order to achieve equality between men and women and adapt to the realities of the market economy. Working with ILO, Belarus had drafted a new labour code. In addition, the marriage and family code in force since 1969 was currently under revision. Steps had also been taken to improve women's health, and Belarus was actively cooperating with WHO in various areas, including family planning. Belarus was prepared to accept any assistance the international community might offer, whether financial resources or expert services, to promote the advancement of women.

43. Violence against women was a disturbing phenomenon. In Belarus a whole series of measures had been taken to combat that social ill. The revised criminal code made sexual offences serious crimes, particularly when the victim was a pregnant woman. Women could not be sentenced to capital punishment in Belarus. The Government planned to set up advisory services so that women could be better informed about their rights.

44. The situation of women in the United Nations Secretariat left much to be desired. The provisions of General Assembly resolution 48/106 of 20 December 1993 were far from being implemented, and some countries continued to be underrepresented. It was important to correct that imbalance, particularly in so far as the countries of Eastern Europe were concerned; consideration should also be given to drafting a plan of action to enhance the status of women in the Secretariat during the period 1995-2000.

45. Belarus attached great importance to the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, especially to Fund projects related to democratization in countries in transition and the reforms they were undertaking.

46. Mr. AGGREY (Ghana) said that despite the adoption in 1985 of the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, the status of women throughout the world could not be said to have improved greatly. There were still many areas where women were unable to exercise their rights fully, and women continued to be victims of violence and discrimination that took such forms as sexual exploitation, the dissemination of degrading images of women and women's underrepresentation in decision-making positions. For that reason the Ghanaian Government attached the highest importance to the Fourth World Conference on Women, for which it was actively preparing through the National Council on Women and Development. The Council had collected data on women throughout the country and prepared gender-disaggregated statistics in a broad range of areas (education, employment, economic activities, religion, customs and traditions, health, political participation and decision-making) and had submitted Ghana's national report to the Secretariat. A number of non-governmental organizations had provided support, particularly the 31st December Women's Movement, which actively sought to involve women in national development. The Council had also organized national conferences and seminars and had participated in several international conferences, including the African Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference, which had been held at Dakar from 16 to 23 November 1994. That meeting had adopted a platform for action which sought to speed the social, economic and political empowerment of women. Ghana recognized the increasingly evident correlation between the advancement of women on the one hand and economic development and social stability on the other, and hoped that the Fourth World Conference on Women would help to remove the obstacles to women's full participation in economic and social life.

47. While the advancement of women in general was a source of concern, the situation of women in the United Nations Secretariat was equally disturbing. His delegation welcomed the very frank and incisive report on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/49/587) which the Secretary-General had prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/106 of 20 December 1993. It noted with satisfaction that the report contained a strategic plan of action with tangible and measurable objectives which took into account the real obstacles to women's advancement in the Secretariat (attitudes, administrative constraints, etc.). His delegation urged the Secretary-General to continue to pursue his efforts so that women could occupy more senior posts within the Organization.

48. Another question related to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/106 which caused his delegation concern was the strengthening, from within existing resources, of the focal point for women within the Secretariat. The focal point was to be funded from the regular budget only for the biennium 1996-1997, a situation that cast doubt on its immediate future. An appeal would have to be made to donor countries for expert services, which discriminated against States that had experts but lacked the resources to finance their services.

49. The proposed merger of the International Training and Research Centre for Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was supposed to achieve a stronger and more unified programme for the promotion of women and contribute to a more effective utilization of available resources allocated for that purpose. However, to judge from the report issued by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) in September 1994 on that question (A/49/365-E/1994/119), the financial and other benefits of the proposed merger had not been clearly established. His delegation believed that a decision on the matter should be taken by the Fourth World Conference on Women, taking into consideration the additional information that the Secretary-General would provide in the meantime.

AGENDA ITEM 100: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS (continued)

(b) HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, INCLUDING ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS (continued)

(c) CAPITAL PUNISHMENT (continued)

Introduction of draft resolutions A/C.3/49/L.28-L.33

50. Mr. de BARROS (Secretary of the Committee) said that draft resolution A/C.3/49/L.28 had to be reissued for technical reasons and would thus be introduced at a later date.

Draft resolution A/C.3/49/L.29

51. Mr. VENTEGODT (Denmark) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/49/L.29 on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Belgium, Latvia, New Zealand and Tunisia. He drew attention to changes which had been made to paragraph 8 of the text. In the second line of that paragraph the word "an" should be inserted between the words "of" and "adequate" and the words "level of" inserted between the words "stable" and "staffing". In the third line the words "operation and" should be added after the word "efficient".

52. The wording of the draft resolution was very close to the text which the General Assembly had adopted at its forty-seventh session and took into account the 1994 Commission on Human Rights resolution on the same subject. The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture had been established in 1981 to finance assistance projects for torture victims. In 1994 the Fund's Board of Trustees had recommended grants totalling $3.7 million for 106 projects in 60 countries. That amount was insufficient given that requests for assistance totalled $5 million. Accordingly, paragraph 2 of the draft resolution contained an appeal to all Governments, organizations and individuals to contribute to the Fund, if possible on a regular basis and annually before the meeting of the Board of Trustees. The text also requested the Secretary-General to ensure the provision of the staff and technical equipment necessary to ensure the efficient management of the Fund. It was to be hoped that, as in previous years, the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

Draft resolution A/C.3/49/L.30

53. Mr. AQUARONE (Netherlands), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/49/L.30 on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Armenia, Austria, Chile, Hungary and New Zealand, said that in it the General Assembly commended the Committee against Torture on its excellent report (A/49/44) and called on the States parties to the Convention against Torture to adhere strictly to their obligations with regard to the financing of the Committee, so as to enable it to discharge its mandate effectively. The General Assembly welcomed the attention that the Committee against Torture had given to the development of an effective system of reporting on the implementation of the Convention by the States parties and commended the Centre for Human Rights for the consultative services and technical assistance it provided to States at their request, for that purpose. Further, it urged all States to become parties to the Convention. Currently, 81 countries were signatories to that instrument which was so important for the protection of human dignity. He expressed the hope that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution A/C.3/49/L.31

54. Mr. SPLINTER (Canada), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/49/L.31 on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, drew attention to a number of amendments. In the seventh preambular paragraph, the words "Welcoming also" should be replaced by "Taking note of". In paragraph 1, the word "Endorses" should be replaced by "Welcomes". In paragraph 2, the word "also" should be inserted just after the word "Welcomes". Paragraph 4, subparagraph (b), should start with the words "Recommending, where appropriate, the designation of ...", and the last line of paragraph 13 following the words "resolution 48/120" should be deleted. The words "from the existing regular budget of the United Nations" should be inserted at the end of paragraph 16. The first two lines of paragraph 17, should be amended to read "Requests the High Commissioner for Human Rights, acting within his mandate as set out in General Assembly resolution 48/141, to ensure the preparation of an inventory of all international human rights standard-setting activities from within existing resources ...".

55. The words "from within existing resources" should be inserted after the word "year" in the second line of paragraph 19, and again, in the first line of paragraph 20, after the word "ensure". Paragraph 21 should be deleted and the subsequent paragraphs renumbered accordingly.

56. The draft resolution reflected the concern of Member States to ensure the effective implementation of international human rights instruments. It called for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the fifth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies (A/49/537), called on those bodies to examine ways of improving their functioning and again requested the Secretary-General that they be afforded sufficient resources. He stressed the need to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

Draft resolution A/C.3/49/L.32

57. Mr. FULCI (Italy) said that the tasks assigned to the Third Committee were among the most important and most delicate in the United Nations. Introducing draft resolution A/C.3/49/L.32 on capital punishment, on behalf of his own country and the 37 other sponsors, who had since been joined by Bolivia, Germany, Micronesia and Venezuela, he said that 12 other States were also considering joining the list.

58. The draft resolution before the Committee was a revised version of the one annexed to document A/49/234, by which 34 Member States had requested the inclusion of an item entitled "Capital Punishment" in the agenda of the General Assembly.

59. He stressed that the States that had supported the initiative did not harbour any intention of imposing their views on other States. The draft resolution fully respected the sovereign right of every State to choose, in its system of criminal law, the punishment it deemed most appropriate. The abolition of the death penalty could only come about by means of an autonomous decision by individual States. The draft resolution was simply meant to inject some humanitarian concerns into the application of capital punishment by excluding pregnant women, minors and the insane from such punishment. It also invited States that had not yet abolished the death penalty to consider instituting a moratorium of a few years so as to take into account the possible human errors that could have been committed, before applying such extreme and irreversible punishment.

60. The sponsors had taken particular care to use moderate language in order to achieve unanimity on a minimum common denominator. Considering that the text was well balanced and deserved support, he expressed the hope that the delegations which had already announced that they intended to vote against the draft resolution, or that they would try to prevent it from being put to the vote so as not to have to pronounce themselves on the question, would reconsider their position.

Draft resolution A/C.3/49/L.33

61. Mr. BARRETO (Peru), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/49/L.33 on behalf of the sponsors who had been joined by Costa Rica, said that the draft resolution referred to General Assembly resolution 47/134, which had been adopted in 1992, and recalled subsequent resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights and the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. The text reaffirmed, in paragraph 1, that extreme poverty and exclusion from society constituted violations of human dignity and that steps should therefore be taken to eliminate them. The sponsors were aware that extreme poverty continued to spread in all parts of the world. They emphasized the need for a complete and in-depth study of extreme poverty based on the experience and thoughts of the poorest. The text highlighted the work carried out in that area by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Leandro Despouy, an account of which was contained in the provisional report presented by the latter to the Subcommission (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1994/19). In the opinion of the co-sponsors, the text was in keeping with the spirit of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. It

underlined the importance of the forthcoming World Summit for Social Development where poverty would be one of the issues on the agenda.

42. The sponsors of the draft resolution called upon delegations to ensure that draft resolution A/C.3/49/L.33 was adopted without a vote.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.